



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE LOTUS MAGAZINE

Volume IX

April, 1918

Number 7

## STUDIES IN TEMPERAMENT

BY CHARLES MERCIER, M.D., F.R.C.P.

### IV

#### THE ENVIOUS TEMPERAMENT

"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?"—Prov. xxvii. 4.

ENVY and jealousy are often used interchangeably, as if they meant the same thing. In fact they are profoundly different. Envy regards one person only, and one person directly. Jealousy regards the relation between two other people. Envy is felt towards him or her who is more fortunate than the envious; jealousy towards him or her who is preferred by some third person to the jealous. In jealousy three people are concerned; in envy only two. Envy and jealousy often go together, but they do not necessarily go together, either in the sense that they are felt towards the same person or in the sense that they are felt by the same person. The envious person is not necessarily a jealous person, nor is the jealous person necessarily envious; but nevertheless the two temperaments often go together.

In the Litany we pray to be delivered from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness; but evidently the form of the prayer leaves it doubtful whether

we pray to be saved from experiencing these passions, or whether we pray to be saved from being the object of them. Either fate is undesirable, and we may well pray to be saved from both. In experience we find that hatred, malice, and uncharitableness are included in envy—included, not as a species are included in a genus, but as ingredients are included in a pudding. They are parts of its composition. Envy is, in fact, that hatred, malice, and uncharitableness that is cherished towards those who are more fortunate than the envious. The envious poor man hates the man who is richer than himself; the envious plain woman hates the woman who is better looking.

People are not usually envied for what they have achieved or earned. They are envied for that which the caprice of fortune has bestowed upon them. If the man is envied for his achievements, he is envied, not for achieving it, but for the opportunity which came his way. The more of merit that has gone to procure for him

the good things of life, the less he is envied for them. It is the unearned, unmerited good fortune for which he is envied. The envier is outraged by a sense of injustice. Why should unmerited, unearned good fortune come to another rather than to him! He is not absolutely worse off for the good fortune of another, but he is relatively worse off; and the sense of injury rankles in his mind. The natural effect of injury is to provoke retaliation; and since the person who feels himself injured by the good fortune of another cannot retaliate upon the good fortune, or upon the chapter of accidents that bestows the good fortune, he seeks to retaliate upon the recipient of the good fortune. The envious man hates the envied, and "hates anyone the man he would not injure?" The envied man is always in jeopardy from his envier. The retaliation usually takes the form of detraction. Commonly the very fact that the envied is more favoured by fortune than the envier lifts him out of the reach of more serious forms of injury and detraction is the only weapon left to the envier; but envy has this curious peculiarity, that it is apt to express itself not only—perhaps but slightly—in attacks upon the envied, but also, and more, in attacks on innocent third parties. The envious person is consumed by a rage of hatred against the envied, and if the envied is out of his reach, he will strike blindly against anyone who happens to be within his reach. His unfortunate family are his chief victims. Some piece of good fortune has befallen one of his acquaintances, from whom he must, in spite of himself, conceal his envy, and whom perhaps the laws of good breeding compel him, in spite of himself, to congratulate; and the suppression of his passion weights the safety-valve and increases the internal pressure to the bursting-point. As soon as he finds himself where he can safely blow off

steam, he lets himself go, and then woe to his unfortunate subordinates and dependants! They are amazed by an exhibition of temper for which they have given no provocation, and the source of which is unknown to them.

If the envious person has no dependants, he, or more often she, for this mode of expressing envy is more frequent in women—is apt to sulk, and the sulkiness is sometimes pushed to such surprising extremes as to raise doubts of the sanity of the sulker. Her family are astounded when the sulker, without rhyme or reason known to them, will refuse to speak, will refuse to eat, will lock herself into her bedroom for days together, will go without fire in the depth of winter, will mortify herself and render the whole household uncomfortable, to all appearance from mere caprice, and without provocation or justification of any kind. Such conduct is scarcely sane—it seems so motiveless. But if we could dive into the mind of the actress, if we could extract a candid and complete confession from her, we should find that she has a motive, and that the motive is a frenzy of envy. Such women or girls are usually obstinately dumb during these attacks, or if they break silence, it is only to utter some viperish vituperation; but if we are vigilant, we shall often notice a chance word which gives the instructed mind a clue, and reveals a consuming, raging envy as the underlying motive of the outbreak.

"A man that is busy and inquisitive is commonly envious," so says Bacon. By "busy" he meant busy in a sense now obsolete, or rather, in the sense of "busies himself"—that is to say, meddling. Bacon's wisdom is much over-rated. He is one of those men who, like Plato, Aristotle, and Mill, have reputations out of all proportion to their deserts. Here he puts the cart before the horse. It is not that meddling and inquisitive people are

commonly envious, but that envious people are commonly meddling and inquisitive. Their consciousness of their own merits is a raw surface which is scarified by having the merits of others brought to their notice; and yet they cannot help tormenting themselves by meddling and inquisitive investigation into the business of other people. In as far as these inquiries discover the defects and misfortunes of other people, in so far the meddler is a happy man or woman; but alas! his investigations may bring to light only the merits, or the unmerited good fortune, of their subject, and then the envier writhes in torment. But he does not desist. He still hopes to find something to give him consolation, so he still meddles and inquires. Bacon is much nearer the truth when he says "Neither can he that mindeth but his own business find much matter for envy." Here he is unquestionably right. Envy arises from the contemplation of other people's fortunes, and the man who confines his attention to his own business is precluded from envy. "Men of noble birth" he says "are noted to be envious towards new men when they rise. For the distance is altered; and it is like a deceit of the eye that, when others come on, they think themselves go back." In this he gets near the truth of the matter, that envy arises out of comparison. It is excited by the comparison of the better fortune of others with our own worse fortune. "Lastly," he says, "near kinsfolk and fellows in office, and those that are bred together, are more apt to envy their equals when they are raised." This is true, but Bacon does not see why it is true. Such cases are peculiarly provocative of envy because there is no ignoring them. They thrust themselves upon our notice, and must be attended to. And, moreover, the comparison is more insistent. We are not compelled to compare ourselves with those

who are far from us, who are not personally known to us, and with whom we have had little to do; but we cannot help comparing ourselves and our fortunes with those immediately around us; and it is as true of envy as of hatred, of love, and of other personal passions, that frequent personal intercourse is necessary for their development in full strength. However bitterly we may hate a man, the hatred dies away if he goes to India and we never more hear of him. That absence makes the heart grow fonder is only true when the absence is brief.

Envy includes hatred, but it is not the same as hatred. It is a conditioned hatred, and the hatred lasts only as long as the conditions last—that is to say, as long as the fortune of the envied continues to be better than that of the envier. The hated man is still hated even in misfortune; but let the envied man meet with disaster, and he is no longer an object of hatred. The hatred was conditional, and now the condition is abolished, the hatred goes with it. The envier is quite capable of showing kindness, nay, he finds a genuine delight in showing kindness to the man in his misfortune whom he envied in his good fortune. Envy is the result of comparison, and the result of the comparison is now favourable to the envier, so that he envies no longer; and so delighted is he at the relief to his feelings which the new situation brings, that he is quite capable of active benevolence. Indeed, envy is quite consistent with benevolence and beneficence towards any object that does not inspire envy; and the further removed the object is from inspiring envy, the more unmistakably and decidedly worse off the person contemplated than the contemplator, the more active and the more genuine the benevolence of the man who bears nothing but ill-will towards those who are better off than himself.

## V

## THE JEALOUS TEMPERAMENT

The difference between jealousy and envy was outlined in the last chapter. Envy is aroused by the contemplation of but one other person: jealousy depends on the relation between two other persons; and it is curious that although jealousy is a very widespread passion, to which everyone is liable in some degree, a passion which affects not only mankind, but many of the lower animals also, and frequently produces disastrous consequences, yet the double attitude of the jealous person has never become embodied in language. A man is said to be "jealous of" the other man to whom his girl shows an inclination, but there is no phrase to express the corresponding feeling that he entertains towards the girl.

The type of jealousy is sexual jealousy, but jealousy is by no means exclusively sexual. The sycophant is jealous of the person to whom his patron shows inclination. The admiring schoolgirl is jealous of the other girl to whom her adored mistress shows inclination. The child that passionately loves its mother is jealous of the new baby on which the mother lavishes caresses. The basis of jealousy is the desire for the exclusive possession of the love, interest, or attention of another person, which the jealous person desires to hold in monopoly; and jealousy arises when this monopoly is infringed. Of the love, the interest, the concern, the attention of another person the jealous regards himself as the proprietor, and his jealousy is excited when his proprietary rights are infringed. Thus jealousy is but a special case of a much more general passion. The type of the jealous person commonly accepted is the man whose girl prefers another man; but a more general type is the dog

snarling over a bone. The dog regards the bone as his own property, to which he has the right of exclusive possession, and he is ready to defend his right, and to attack anyone who presumes to infringe it; and he proclaims this readiness by his snarl, which is a threat of retaliation upon anyone who presumes to interfere with his proprietary right. So the man feels that the affection, regard, concern, and attention of his girl are his own property, to which he has the right of exclusive possession: he is ready to assert his right, and attack anyone who presumes to interfere with it. The man of jealous temperament is he who has his sense of proprietorship strongly developed, and is sensitive to any interference with it—nay, to any approach to interference, to any possibility or presumption of interference. The jealous dog does not wait until an attempt is made to rob him of his bone; he snarls at the passer-by who is not thinking of him. And the jealous man does not wait to feel jealousy until his exclusive possession is actually interfered with: the mere approach to interference, the possibility of interference, is enough to excite his jealousy.

Jealousy, then, is the feeling that is aroused in us by interference with our proprietorship. It is usually taken as limited to interference with our proprietorship in the affection and regard of a person of the opposite sex, but the feeling thus aroused is indistinguishable from that aroused by diverting the affection and regard of anyone, even of the same sex, and is not widely different from the feeling aroused by interference with any other mode of proprietorship. To use a man's horses or motor-car, or his camera or

cricket-bat, or to smoke his cigars or drink his wines, without his permission, arouses in him an emotion which is scarcely distinguishable from jealousy.

Jealousy, therefore, is by no means dependent on love. It is often associated with love, but it is not necessarily so. Even sexual jealousy may be felt without any intermixture of love. It is by no means unusual for a woman who does not care a straw for her husband, who may even detest him, to be frantically jealous of his attentions to other women. It is not the outraged love that provokes jealousy; it is the infringement of proprietorship. Little as she cares for her husband, she has a strong sense of her proprietorship, not over him, but over his attentions, and if they are directed elsewhere, her jealousy is aroused.

Nor is jealousy by any means exclusively directed towards persons of the sex of the jealous, or towards persons at all. A husband of jealous temperament will be jealous of the man towards whom his wife seems to incline, but he will also be jealous of her woman friend, of her and his own children, even of her lap-dog or her cat. A jealous wife will be jealous not only of her husband's women friends, but also of anything that engrosses a share of that attention to which she lays exclusive claim. She will be jealous of his men friends, of his yacht, his golf, his books, his gun, even of his business, for all of these steal from her a portion of that attention that she seeks solely to engross.

The natural manifestation of envy is, as we have seen in a previous article, retaliation against the envied person, but is by no means restricted to this mode of expression. If such retaliation is impracticable, or even in addition to it, the envier vents his spleen on innocent third parties, or perhaps, by a strange distortion of purpose, punishes himself. The expression of

jealousy is no less diffused and multiplied. It provokes to retaliation; and the retaliation may be directed against either the person or thing towards which the jealousy is felt, or against the person or thing on account of which the jealousy is felt, or against the jealous person himself, or, though more rarely, against an innocent fourth party.

The most natural manifestation of jealousy is retaliation against the intruder—against the person who has infringed the proprietorship of the jealous person, or what he conceives to be his proprietorship—a conception often formed on very inadequate grounds. The person towards whom the jealousy is felt may have taken no active step against the proprietorship, may be ignorant that it has been infringed, may be ignorant that there is any proprietorship, or that any is claimed. A woman may be furiously jealous of the woman to whom her husband or her lover appears to be attracted, even though no such attraction is in fact felt, even though the other woman is ignorant of it if it is felt. A ludicrous instance of jealousy has recently come under the notice of the writer, an instance in which a man conceived a furious jealousy of another who had written upon a subject which the jealous man regarded as his own property; and this although the intruder was totally ignorant that the jealous man had written on that subject, and although others had written on it before the jealous man had done so. But however groundless the jealousy, however absurd the grounds that give rise to it, it is one of the most lethal of the passions, and more often than any other passion prompts to acts of deadly animosity. Although the person to whom the jealousy is directed is an object of this animosity, he is not the sole, nor even usually the chief object. In sexual jealousy the retaliation is more often directed upon

the person on account of whom the jealousy is felt, than towards the person of whom the jealousy is felt. Of the hundreds of assaults committed on the prompting of jealousy that come before the courts every year, but few are committed upon the rival, and these much more often by the jealous woman than by the jealous man. The jealous man does not as a rule assault his rival; he beats his wife or his girl, or cuts her throat. The jealous woman does not as a rule assault her husband or her lover. She seeks out her rival and scratches her face, or perhaps throws vitriol over her.

What would be very surprising if it were not so familiar is that jealousy so frequently prompts the jealous man to injure, neither his rival nor the woman who has given, as he thinks, occasion for jealousy, but himself. That he should try to get his rival out of his way is intelligible; that he should punish the woman who has transferred her allegiance is intelligible; but that he should punish himself, often with capital punishment, is indeed a strange vagary. When he has murdered his faithless wife or lover, it is perhaps not unnatural that he should kill himself, both to forestall the punishment of the law, and because he has now deprived himself of that which made his life most worth living; but that he, or more often she, should kill herself for the motive of jealousy is less explicable. It can be explained, how-

ever, by the consideration that has just been mentioned. The deprivation of her lover deprives the girl, for the time being, of her whole motive and purpose in life. Life is to every man, and still more to every woman, not a gift, but a trust, to be handed on to a succeeding generation. Unknown to herself, unrealised by herself, the craving for motherhood dominates her being. As long as the future has in store for her the realisation and satisfaction of this craving, even if only in possibility, she can endure in hope and tranquillity; but when, by the securing of a lover, she has been brought within sight of the realisation of her hopes, and when, by his desertion, the cup is dashed from her lips, all interest in life is abolished, and she hastens to quit the scene that is become distasteful to her.

Jealousy, in some degree, is natural to man and woman, and all possess it more or less; but in the jealous temperament it assumes a dominant influence. The man of jealous temperament is furious if his wife but shows interest in the conversation of her partner at a dinner; the woman of jealous temperament is furious if her husband is even commonly polite to a lady guest. Persons of this temperament may be quite aware of the groundlessness and absurdity of their jealousy. They may deplore it and despise themselves for it; but for all that it dominates them, and they cannot help it.